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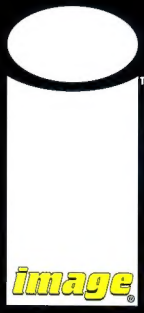
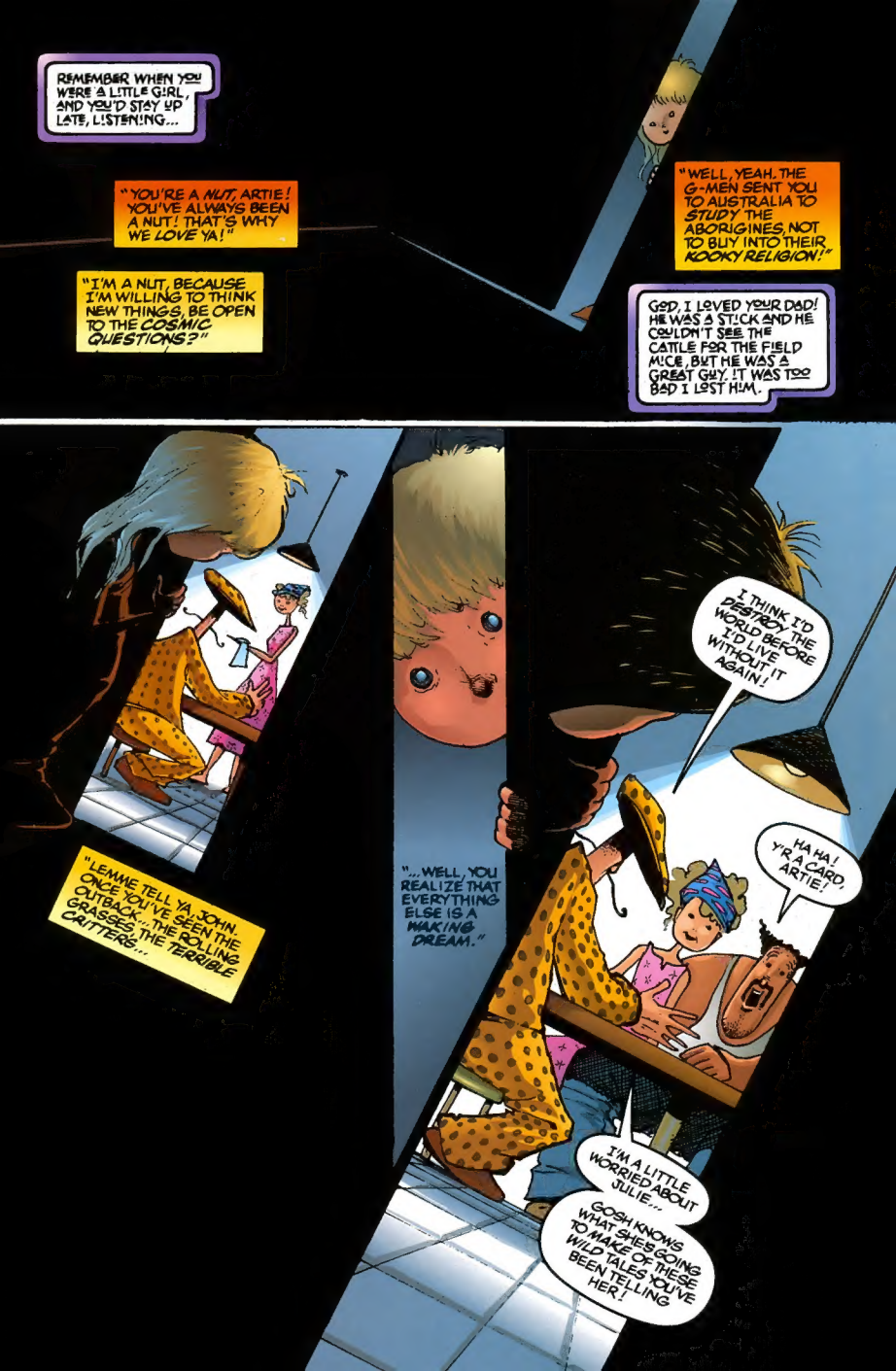
PRINTED IN CANADA.

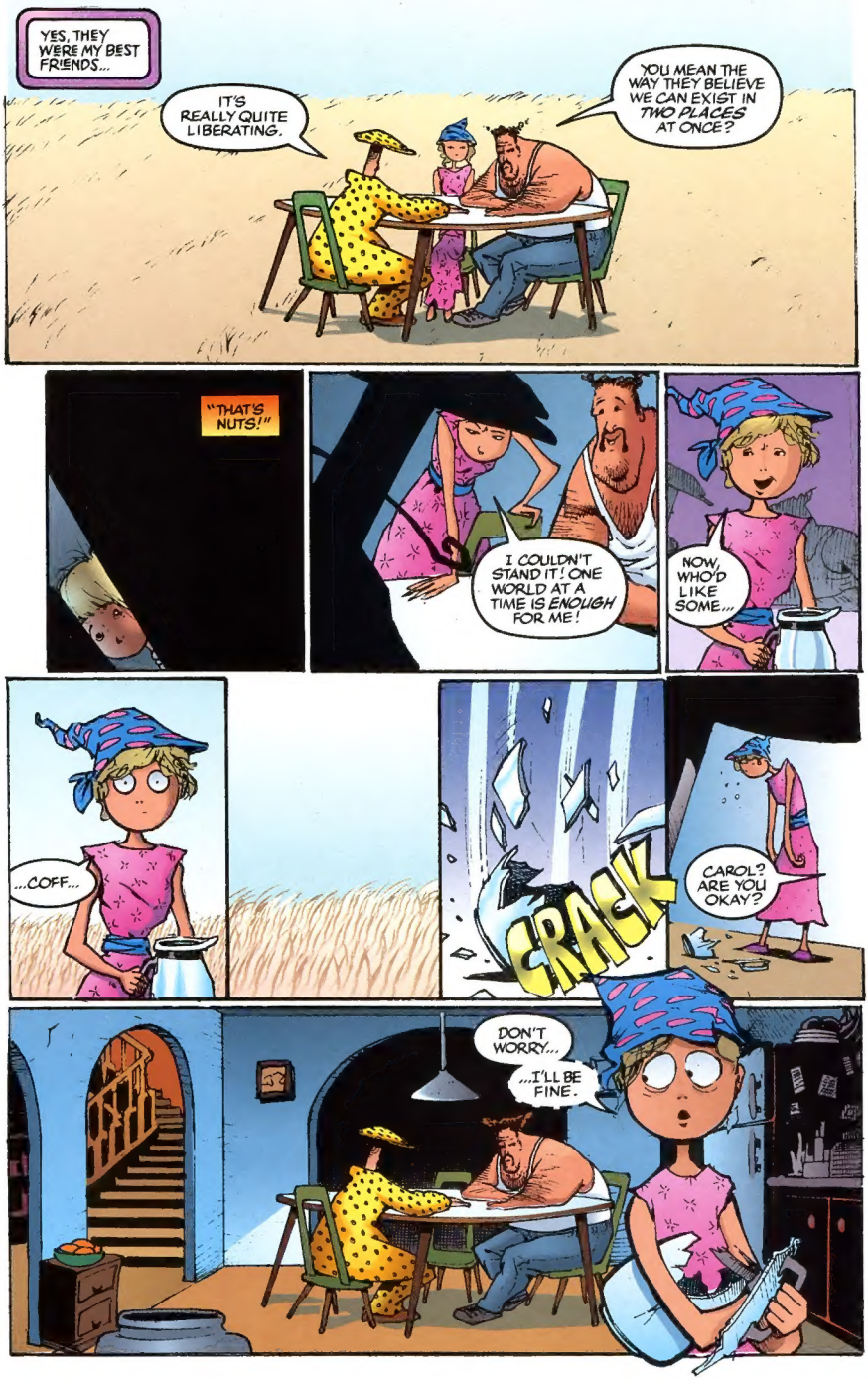


"SO, JULIE... WHERE WERE WE?"
"I JUST WANT YOU TO REMEMBER, I ONLY HAVE YOUR BEST INTERESTS AT HEART!"
YEAH, I'LL BET!

PLINK
HUH?
I HOPE YOU APPRECIATE THIS, JULIE! CRAWLING THROUGH A VENTILATION SHAFT ISN'T EASY, EVEN FOR AN ISZ!
HE'S HAD TO BREAK SEVERAL IMPORTANT LAWS OF PHYSICS TO GET THESE TO YOU...
BECAUSE YOU HAVE TO REMEMBER!
THESE ARE MINE!
QUEEN OF JUNGLE
MOMMY
DAD
ME
FAIRY TAIL
UNCLE ARTIE
MY DRAWINGS WHEN I WAS A KID!

LAST...
Fairy Tale
THAT'S RIGHT, KID! TIME FOR THE...
I hate fairy stories Uncle Artie!
NOW, JULIE, BE GOOD, OR I'LL SEND YOU TO BED WITHOUT YOUR RETCHING, GUILT-RIDDEN PSYCHIC METAPHORS!


REMEMBER WHEN YOU WERE A LITTLE GIRL, AND YOU'D STAY UP LATE, LISTENING...
"YOU'RE A NUT, ARTIE! YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN A NUT! THAT'S WHY WE LOVE YA!"
"I'M A NUT, BECAUSE I'M WILLING TO THINK NEW THINGS, BE OPEN TO THE COSMIC QUESTIONS?"
"WELL, YEAH. THE G-MEN SENT YOU TO AUSTRALIA TO STUDY THE ABORIGINES, NOT TO BUY INTO THEIR KOOKY RELIGION!"
GOD, I LOVED YOUR DAD! HE WAS A STICK AND HE COULDN'T SEE THE CATTLE FOR THE FIELD MICE, BUT HE WAS A GREAT GUY. IT WAS TOO BAD I LOST HIM.
"LEMME TELL YA, JOHN. ONCE YOU'VE SEEN THE OUTBACK... THE ROLLING GRASSES, THE TERRIBLE CRITTERS...
"...WELL, YOU REALIZE THAT EVERYTHING ELSE IS A WAKING DREAM."
I THINK I'D DESTROY THE WORLD BEFORE I'D LIVE WITHOUT IT AGAIN!
HA HA! Y'R A CARD, ARTIE!
I'M A LITTLE WORRIED ABOUT JULIE...
GOSH KNOWS WHAT SHE'S GOING TO MAKE OF THESE WILD TALES YOU'VE BEEN TELLING HER!


YES, THEY WERE MY BEST FRIENDS...
IT'S REALLY QUITE LIBERATING.
YOU MEAN THE WAY THEY BELIEVE WE CAN EXIST IN TWO PLACES AT ONCE?
"THAT'S NUTS!"
I COULDN'T STAND IT! ONE WORLD AT A TIME IS ENOUGH FOR ME!
NOW, WHO'D LIKE SOME...
...COFF...
CRACK
CAROL? ARE YOU OKAY?
DON'T WORRY...
...I'LL BE FINE.

I ADMIRED CAROL. I WAS ALWAYS AFRAID THE EVIL INSIDE ME WOULD BREAK FREE. BUT SHE WAS ALWAYS IN CONTROL... OF HERSELF AND EVERYONE AROUND HER.
THIS IS A GOOD LIFE YOU AND JOHN HAVE HERE, SNOOKS. I'M GLAD YOU CHOSE IT FOR HIM.
FUNNY MAN!
OKAY, THEN... SERIOUSLY, WHAT'D YOU THINK OF AUSTRALIA? A PEACEFUL PLACE, BUT MAYBE TOO MUCH MOWING, huh?
HONESTLY, ARTIE, I SOMETIMES DON'T KNOW WHAT TO MAKE OF YOU!

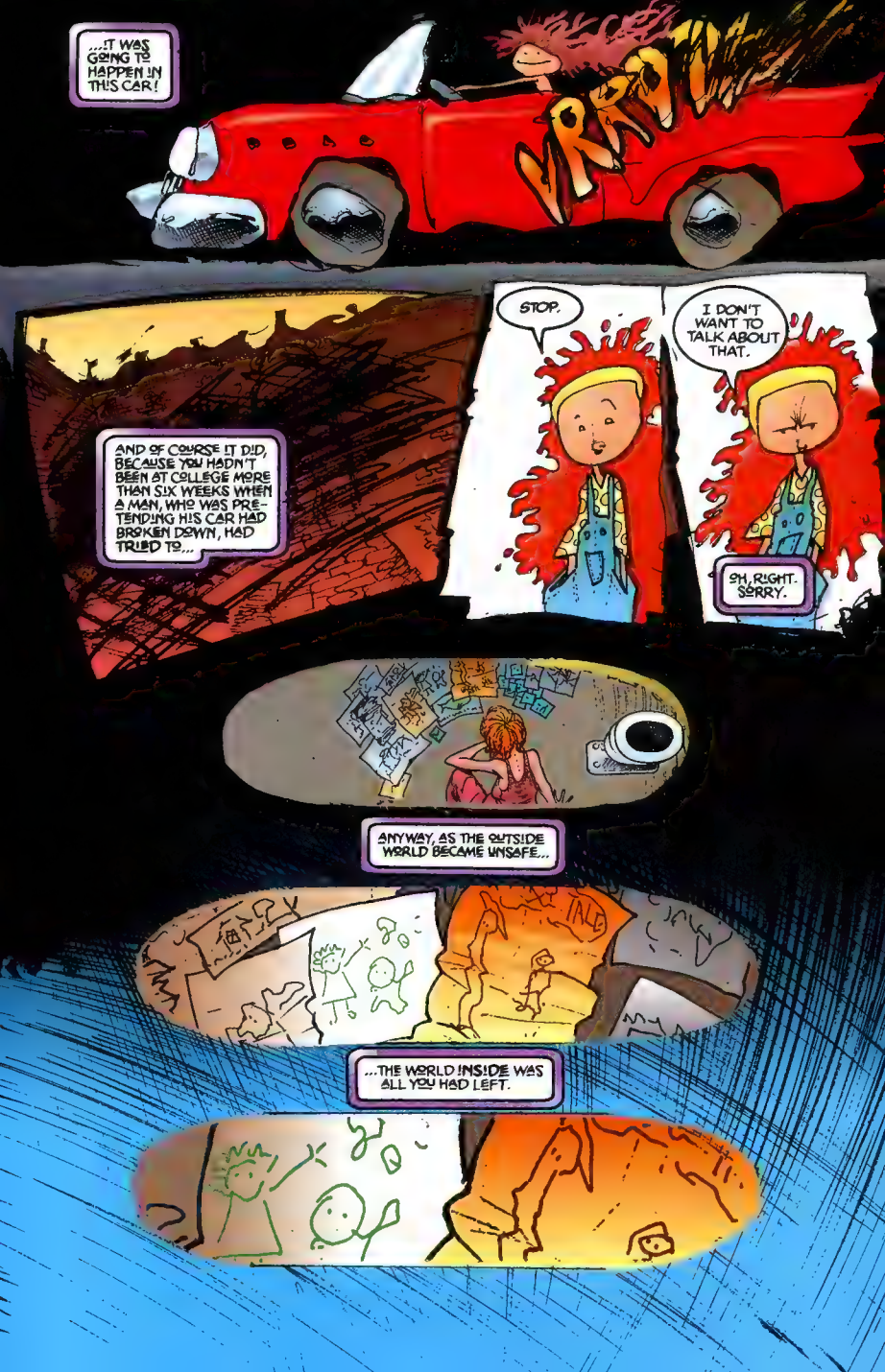
IF I HAD SEEN YOUR HORRIBLE GRASSY "OUTBACK," IT WOULD MEAN EITHER I WAS AS CUCKOO AS YOU OR THE WORLD WAS A DIFFERENT PLACE THAN IT IS! SOMETHING NEITHER OF US WANTS!
I SEE...

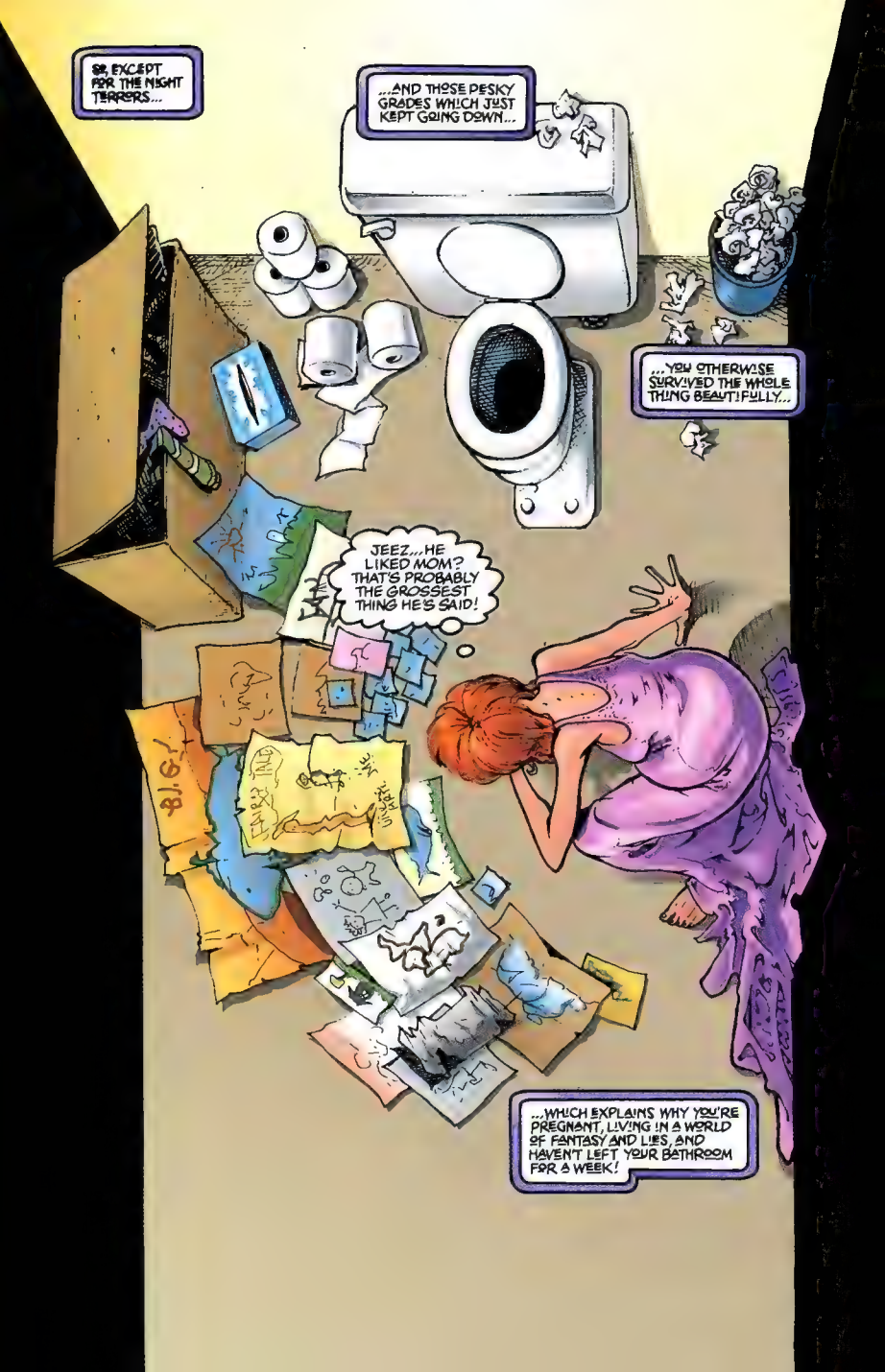
WELL, I DON'T. SO WHAT DO YOU WANT IN YOUR LEMONADE?
WHADDAYAGOT?
I OFTEN WONDERED HOW MUCH YOU KNEW THAT SUMMER.

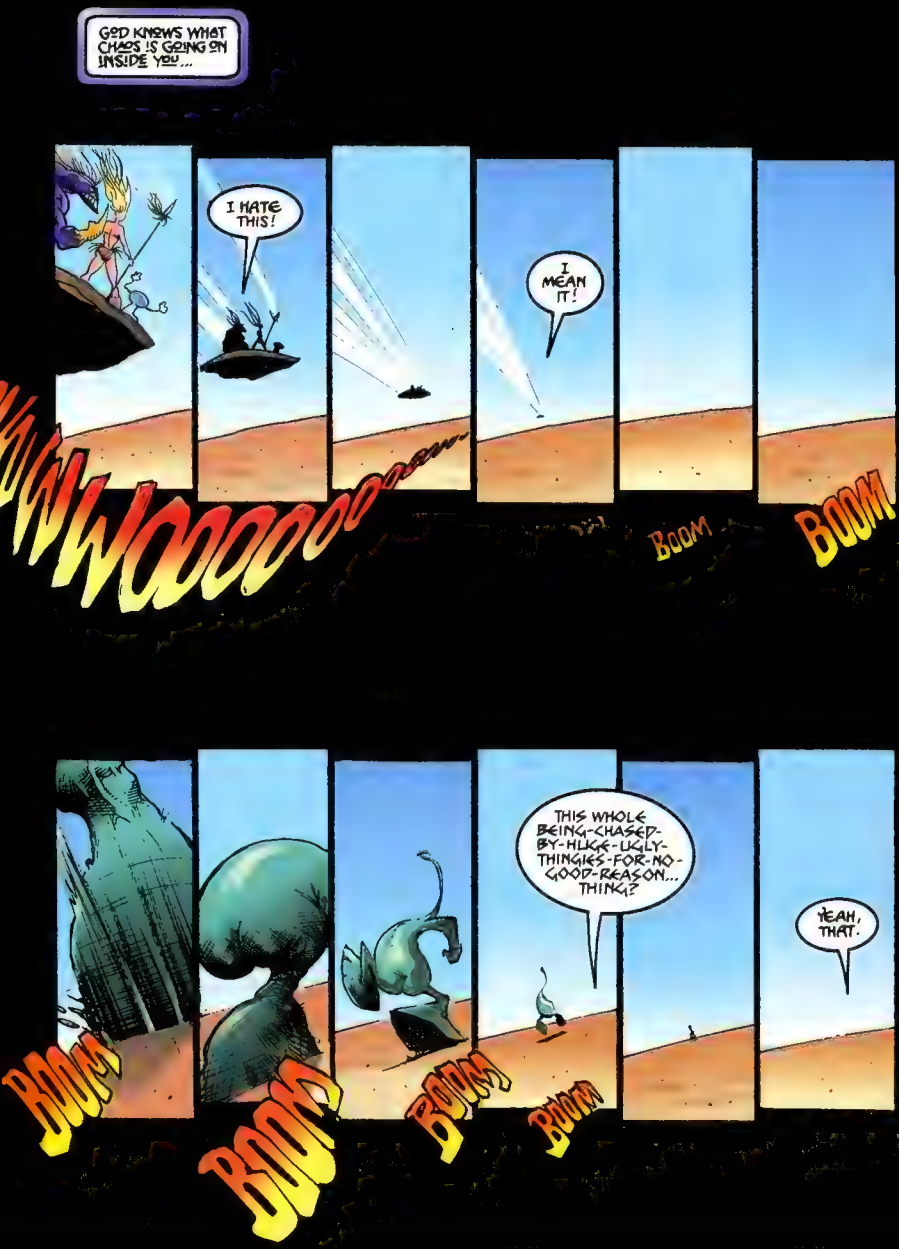
YOUR MOTHER WAS VERY STRONG. SHE COULD SEE INTO MY HEART AND SHE WAS THE ONLY ONE I COULD TRUST. BUT SHE WASN'T BRAVE ENOUGH TO ACCEPT THE GIFT SHE WAS GIVEN!

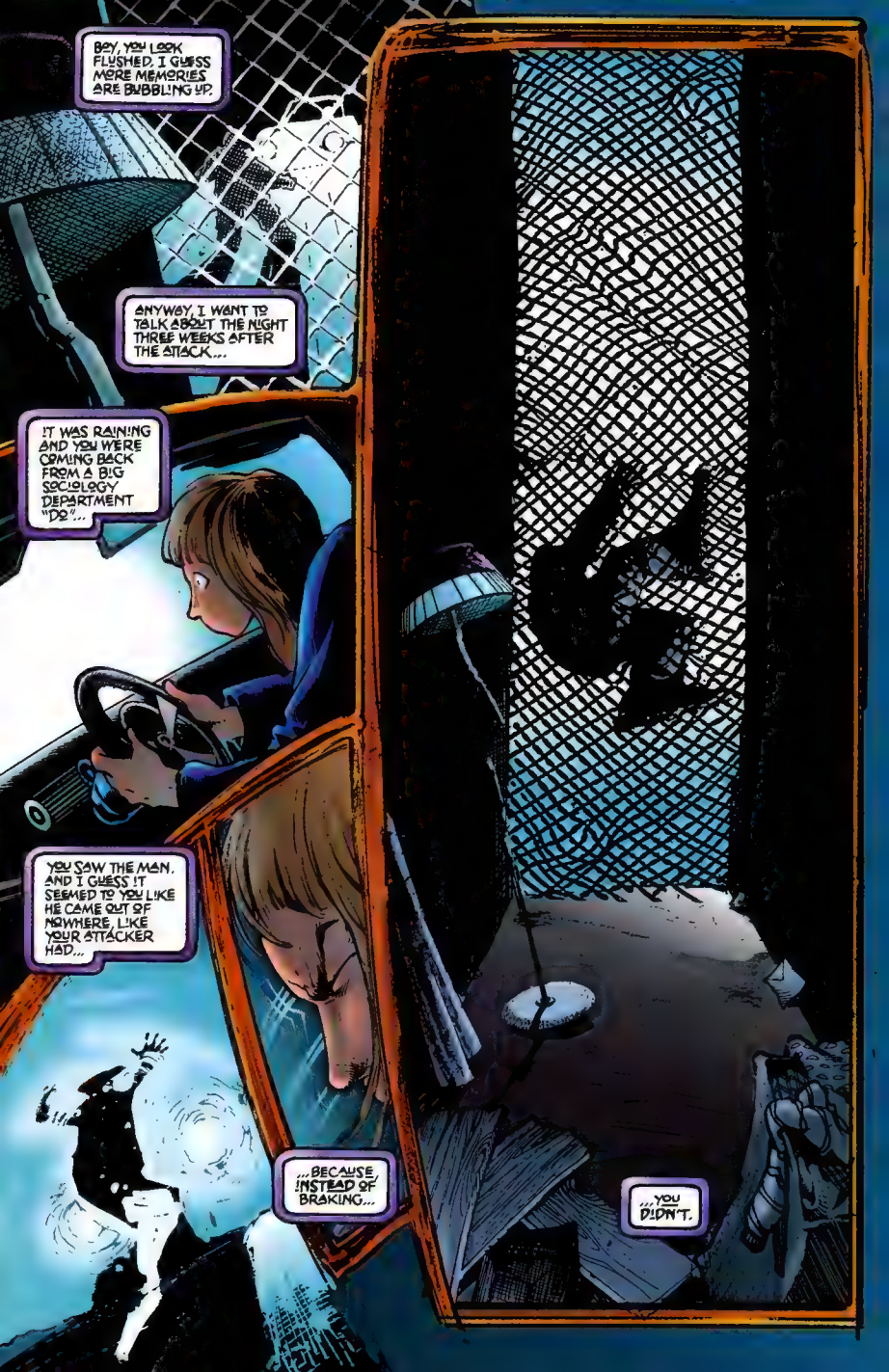
DID I MENTION HOW MUCH I LIKED JOHN?
SO THEY WANT ME TO DESIGN THIS CITY...
ALL FULL OF GARGOYLES AND ART DECO CRAP! I TELL YA, ARTIE, HOWARD ROARK WOULDN'T'A PUT UP WITH IT!
BUT JOHN WAS A MAN ON HIS WAY DOWN...
JEEZ, MAN, I KNOW...
I HATE ARCHITECTURE.
AND ALL I COULD THINK OF WAS THE CONVERSATION THAT WAS GOING ON DOWN THE HALL. THE STORIES YOUR YOUNG MIND WOULD MAKE OF ALL THIS...
...IT'S ROUGH...
HAD YOU INHERITED YOUR MOTHER'S ABILITY TO SEE?
I COULDA BEEN MAURICE SENDAK. HE'S GOD, MAN!
AND WOULD YOU TURN YOUR BACK ON IT, AS WELL?

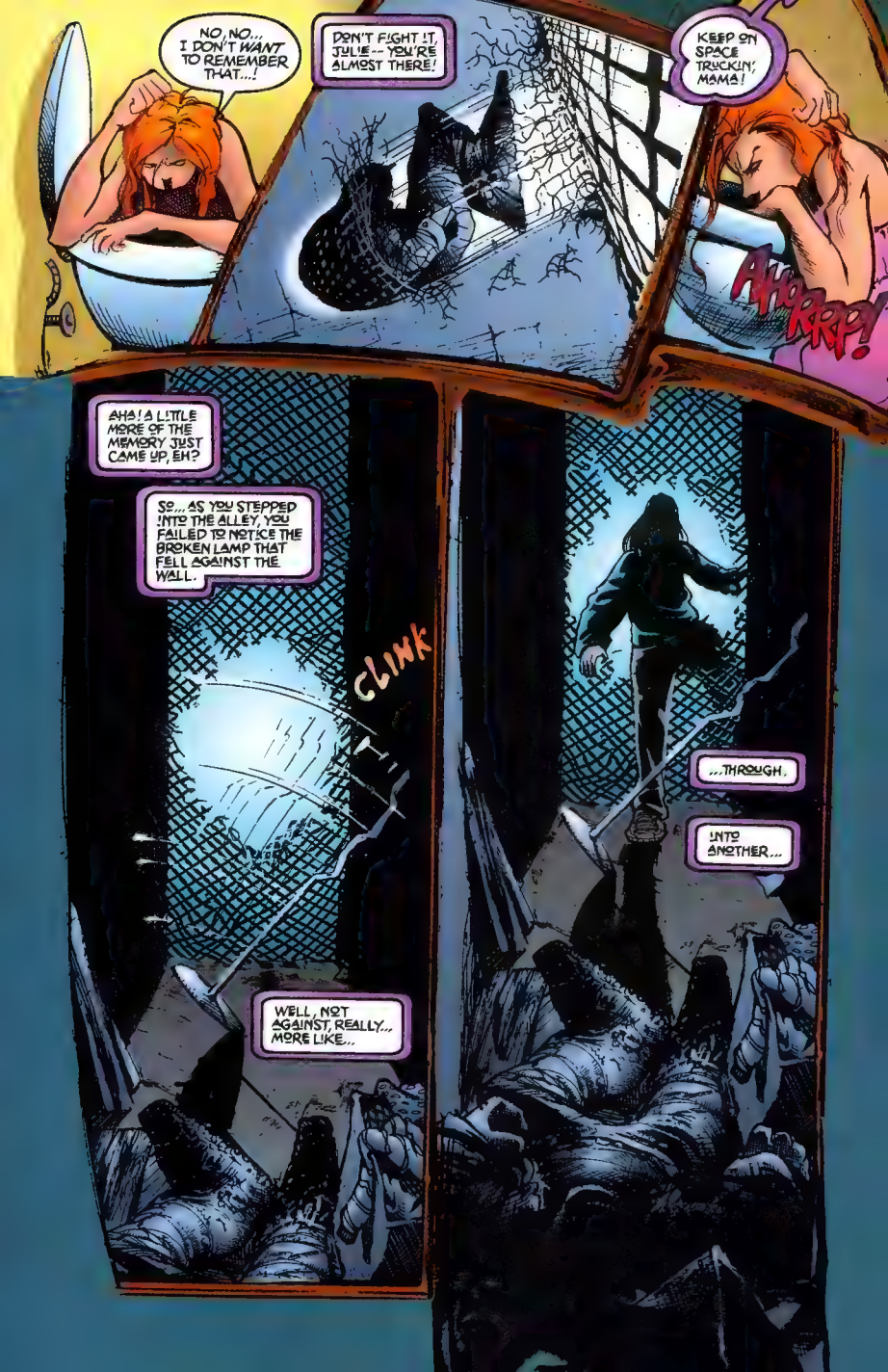
AND SO THE SUMMER ENDED, AND I KEPT AN EYE ON YOU AS YOU GREW FROM A SPRIG...
...TO AN ADOLESCENT...
...TO A REBELLIOUS YOUNG WOMAN...
...WITH REMARKABLE (AND ARTIFICIAL)...
...BRIGHT RED HAIR...
...WHICH YOUR MOTHER HATED...
...WHICH WAS PRETTY MUCH THE POINT, WASN'T IT?
SO I CAN AFFORD IT, MOM, AND I GOT THE INSURANCE AND I'M GONNA NEED A CAR WHEN I'M OFF AT COLLEGE...
SMILIN' ED'S USED CARS
Uh...
YOUR FATHER HATES THIS CAR!
A STEAL!
WELL...
NO, HE DOESN'T, MOM. HE JUST SAID...
HE HATES THIS CAR, BECAUSE IT MAKES YOU LOOK CHEAP AND TRASHY. AND IT'S DANGEROUS. AND I FOR ONE WOULDN'T GO AGAINST HIM WHEN HE'S GOT HIS MIND MADE UP!
BUT YOU STOOD FIRM, AND FOR ONCE YOUR DAD SUPPORTED YOU. WHICH WAS GOOD, BECAUSE YOU HAD THE FEELING THAT IF ANYTHING IMPORTANT WAS EVER GOING TO HAPPEN TO YOU...


...IT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN IN THIS CAR!
VROOM
AND OF COURSE IT DID, BECAUSE YOU HADN'T BEEN AT COLLEGE MORE THAN SIX WEEKS WHEN A MAN, WHO WAS PRETENDING HIS CAR HAD BROKEN DOWN, HAD TRIED TO...
STOP.
I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT THAT.
OH, RIGHT. SORRY.
ANYWAY, AS THE OUTSIDE WORLD BECAME UNSAFE...
...THE WORLD INSIDE WAS ALL YOU HAD LEFT.


SO, EXCEPT FOR THE NIGHT TERRORS...
...AND THOSE PESKY GRADES WHICH JUST KEPT GOING DOWN...
...YOU OTHERWISE SURVIVED THE WHOLE THING BEAUTIFULLY...
JEEZ...HE LIKED MOM? THAT'S PROBABLY THE GROSSEST THING HE'S SAID!
...WHICH EXPLAINS WHY YOU'RE PREGNANT, LIVING IN A WORLD OF FANTASY AND LIES, AND HAVEN'T LEFT YOUR BATHROOM FOR A WEEK!

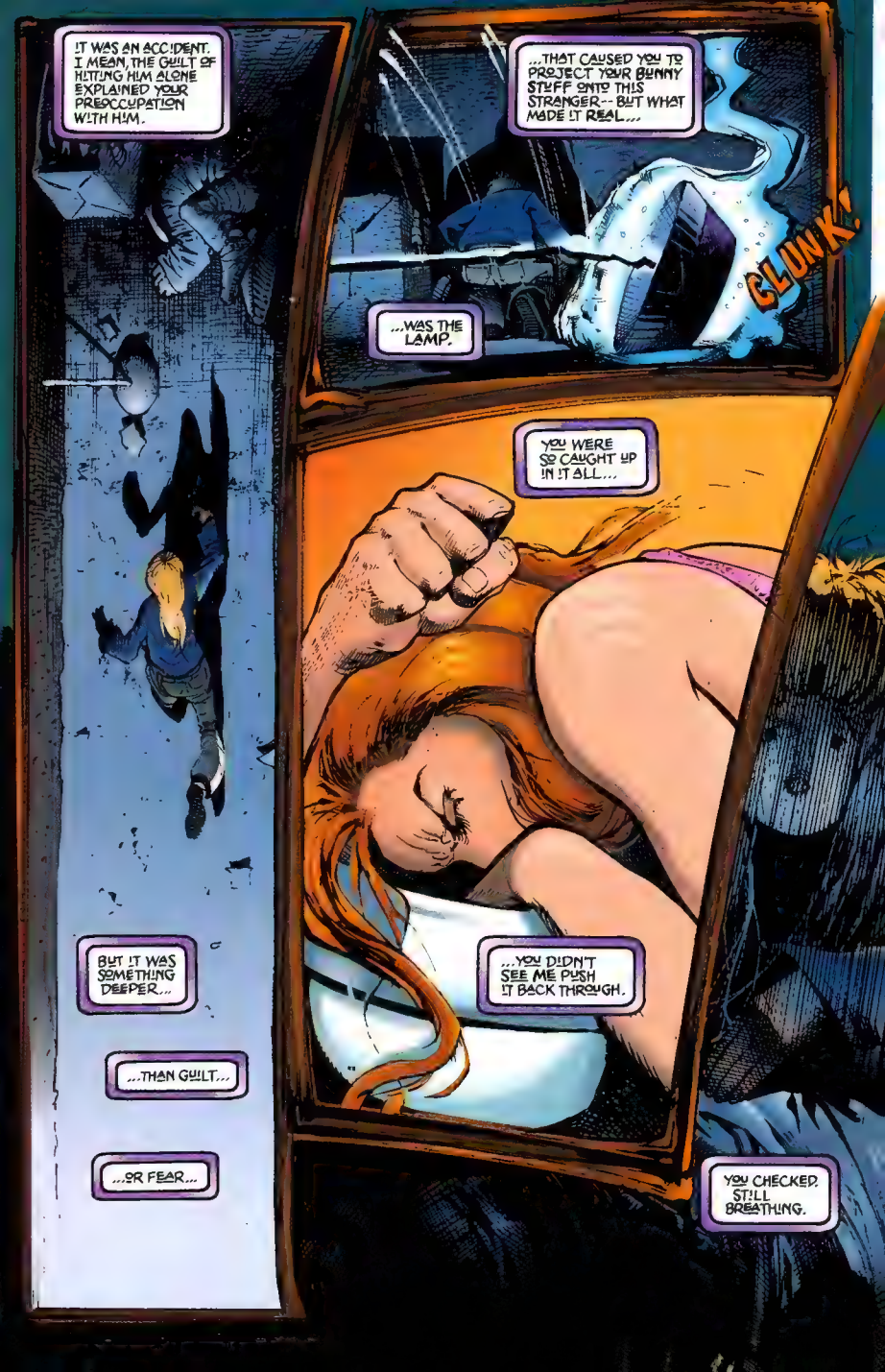

GOD KNOWS WHAT CHAOS IS GOING ON INSIDE YOU...
I HATE THIS!
I MEAN IT!
WWWoooooo
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
THIS WHOLE BEING-CHASED-BY-HUGE-UGLY-THINGIES-FOR-NO-GOOD-REASON... THING?
YEAH, THAT.

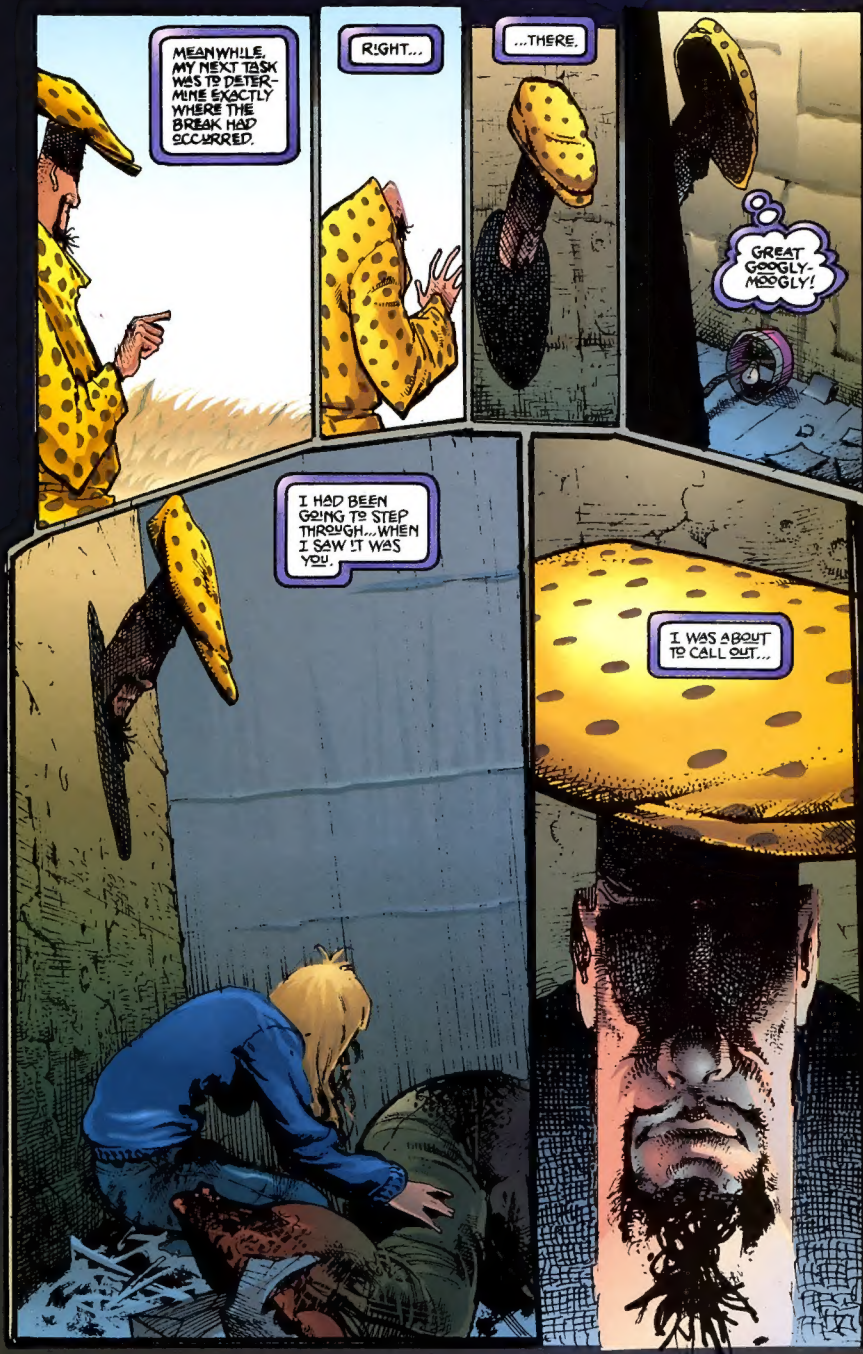

BOY, YOU LOOK FLUSHED. I GUESS MORE MEMORIES ARE BUBBLING UP.
ANYWAY, I WANT TO TALK ABOUT THE NIGHT THREE WEEKS AFTER THE ATTACK...
IT WAS RAINING AND YOU WERE COMING BACK FROM A BIG SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT "DO"...
YOU SAW THE MAN, AND I GUESS IT SEEMED TO YOU LIKE HE CAME OUT OF NOWHERE, LIKE YOUR ATTACKER HAD...
...BECAUSE INSTEAD OF BRAKING...
...YOU DIDN'T.


NO, NO... I DON'T WANT TO REMEMBER THAT...!
DON'T FIGHT IT, JULIE -- YOU'RE ALMOST THERE!
KEEP ON SPACE TRUCKIN', MAMA!
AHHRRP!
AHA! A LITTLE MORE OF THE MEMORY JUST CAME UP, EH?
SO... AS YOU STEPPED INTO THE ALLEY, YOU FAILED TO NOTICE THE BROKEN LAMP THAT FELL AGAINST THE WALL.
CLINK
WELL, NOT AGAINST, REALLY... MORE LIKE...
...THROUGH...
INTO ANOTHER...

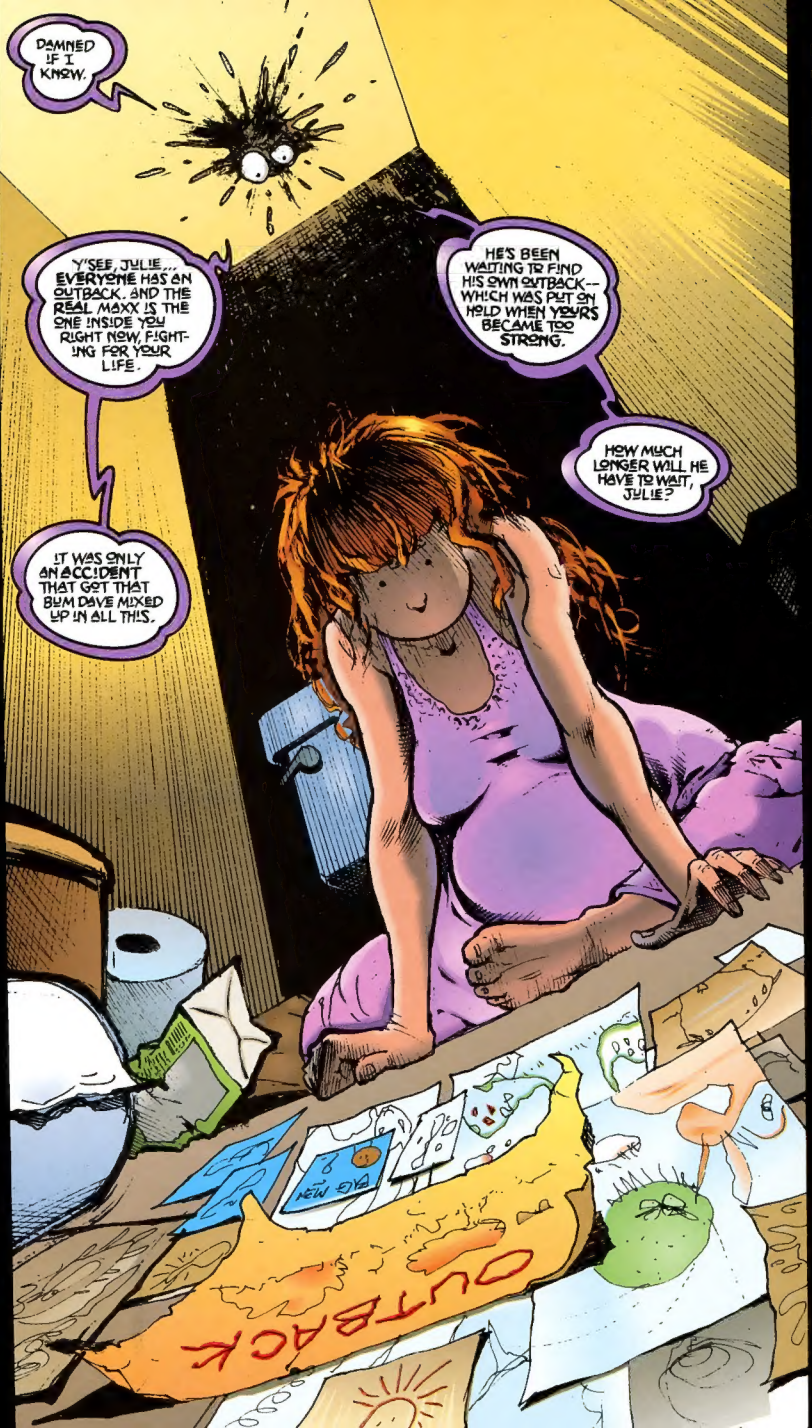
...WORLD.
WHICH BRINGS US TO ME, ALWAYS MY FAVORITE PART OF THE STORY.
I WAS TAKING A WALK IN THE BACK OF YOUR MIND THAT EVENING, WHEN I SAW SOMETHING ODD.
CLANK!
A BIT OF A LAMP HAD APPEARED IN MID-AIR.
"HOW ODD," I THOUGHT. "A LAMP."
YAWN!

OBVIOUSLY, SOME PSYCHIC EVENT OF TERRIBLE PROPORTIONS HAD TAKEN PLACE.
THAT, OR SOME BOOB KNOCKED SOME TRASH INTO THE OUTBACK...
...THROUGH A DIMENSIONAL PORTAL I'D FORGOTTEN TO CLOSE.
SOMETHING WAS WRONG. NOTHING INORGANIC HAD EVER GOTTEN THROUGH BEFORE.
EVEN MY COAT AND HAT WERE MADE FROM OUTBACK CREATURES.
HOW COULD THIS BE?


IT WAS AN ACCIDENT. I MEAN, THE GUILT OF HITTING HIM ALONE EXPLAINED YOUR PREOCCUPATION WITH HIM.
...THAT CAUSED YOU TO PROJECT YOUR BUNNY STUFF ONTO THIS STRANGER-- BUT WHAT MADE IT REAL...
CLUNK!
...WAS THE LAMP.
YOU WERE SO CAUGHT UP IN IT ALL...
BUT IT WAS SOMETHING DEEPER...
...YOU DIDN'T SEE ME PUSH IT BACK THROUGH.
...THAN GUILT...
...OR FEAR...
YOU CHECKED. STILL BREATHING.


MEANWHILE, MY NEXT TASK WAS TO DETERMINE EXACTLY WHERE THE BREAK HAD OCCURRED.
RIGHT...
...THERE.
GREAT GOOGLY-MOOGLY!
I HAD BEEN GOING TO STEP THROUGH... WHEN I SAW IT WAS YOU.
I WAS ABOUT TO CALL OUT...

...WHEN YOU COVERED UP THE BODY AND DROVE AWAY...
POP
POP
POP
FSSSS
POP
POP
...LEAVING BEHIND...
...GOD-KNOWS-WHAT.
IT WAS WONDERFUL.
THE SILKEN PURPLE OF THE LAMPSHADE BEGAN TO FLOW OVER EVERY INCH OF THE STILL FORM.
WAS THERE SOMETHING MAGICAL ABOUT THE LAMPSHADE ITSELF, SOME STRANGE PROPERTY THAT HAD ALLOWED IT TO PENETRATE INTO THE OUTBACK ALL ON ITS OWN?
OR WAS IT ALL YOUR DOING?


DAMNED IF I KNOW.
Y'SEE, JULIE... EVERYONE HAS AN OUTBACK, AND THE REAL MAXX IS THE ONE INSIDE YOU RIGHT NOW, FIGHTING FOR YOUR LIFE.
IT WAS ONLY AN ACCIDENT THAT GOT THAT BUM DAVE MIXED UP IN ALL THIS.
HE'S BEEN WAITING TO FIND HIS OWN OUTBACK-- WHICH WAS PUT ON HOLD WHEN YOURS BECAME TOO STRONG.
HOW MUCH LONGER WILL HE HAVE TO WAIT, JULIE?
OUTBACK
BIG MAN

DID I MENTION HOW MUCH I HATE THIS?
SEVERAL TIMES, BR'ER LAPIN.
SLAP!
OKAY, JUST CHECKING.
SLAP!
NEXT:
STICKY FEET, HAPPY FEET!